



# PATHOLOGY TESTS EXPLAINED

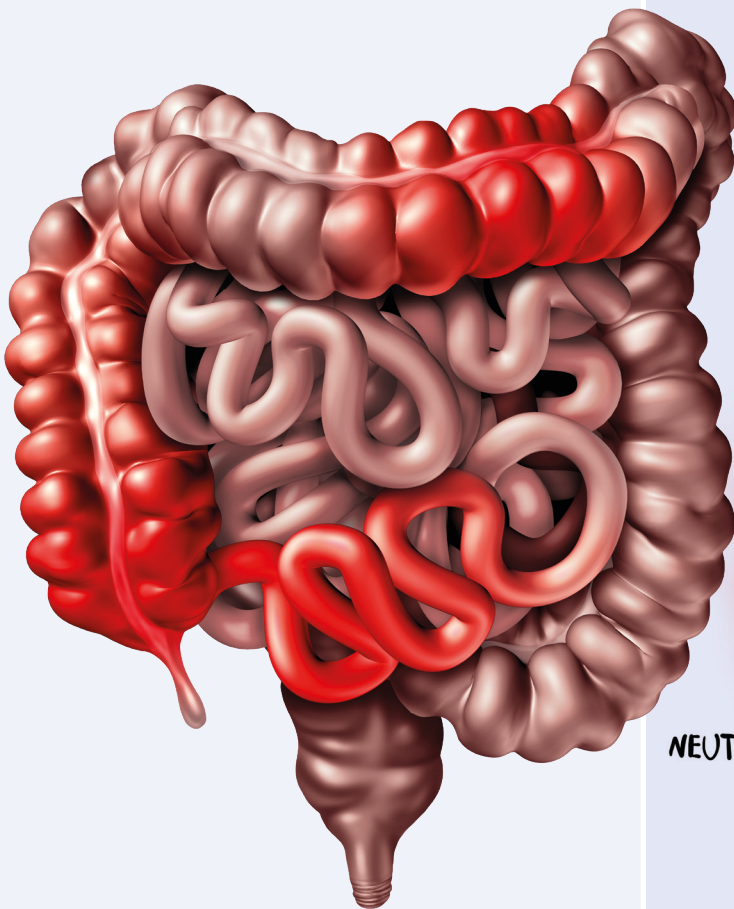
Information about pathology tests to help everyone take control of their health and make the right decisions about their care.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **THE CALPROTECTIN TEST**

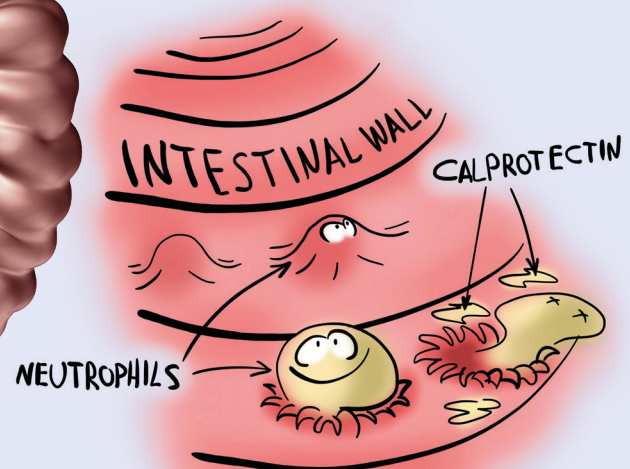
Faecal calprotectin is a very sensitive test for inflammation in your gut. Your doctor might order one if you have symptoms of an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis because it helps differentiate inflammatory from non-inflammatory conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). High levels of calprotectin are also detected with bacterial or parasitic infections and colorectal cancer.

The faecal calprotectin test is typically ordered along with other stool tests, such as a stool culture to detect a bacterial infection, a test for ova – eggs – and parasites (O&P), a stool white blood cell test, and/or a faecal occult blood test (FOBT). A blood test that detects inflammation in the body may also be needed, such as a C-reactive protein (CRP), and/or an erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR).

If you have already been diagnosed with IBD, the calprotectin test can be used if you have a flare up and to help guide treatment. Assessing the level of inflammation in this way can avoid the need for a surgical biopsy.



Inflammatory Bowel Disease (shown in red)





## What is calprotectin?

Calprotectin is a protein that is produced by the immune system when there is inflammation. Inflammation is an important part of the body's immune response to potentially harmful substances – it starts the healing process. It occurs naturally in the intestines as a part of dealing with unwanted bacteria and potentially poisonous substances.

Calprotectin is released by a type of white blood cell called neutrophils that are responsible for managing inflammation. When there is inflammation in the intestines, neutrophils start to accumulate and calprotectin is released into the stool. The more inflammation, the greater the number of neutrophils and the higher the levels of calprotectin.

The lining of the intestines is designed to manage this with some cells activating inflammation and others turning it off. In someone with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, the system does not work properly, and constant inflammation damages the walls of the intestine, which over time becomes worse.



## What your results can tell you

By measuring the level of calprotectin in a stool sample, it is possible to assess the amount of inflammation. A high level of calprotectin in a sample of your stool is likely to be due to IBD. If the test comes back with normal or low level it is most likely due to be IBS, which causes altered bowel habits with no inflammation.



## Having a medical test

The choice of tests your doctor makes is based on your medical history and symptoms. Make sure you tell them everything you think might help. You play a central role in making sure your test results are accurate. Do everything you can to make sure the information you provide is correct.



### Questions to ask your doctor

- Why does this test need to be done?
- Do I need to prepare (such as fast or avoid medications) for the sample collection?
- Will an abnormal result mean I need further tests?
- How could it change the course of my care?
- What will happen next, after the test?

For more detailed information on these and many other tests go to [pathologytestsexplained.org.au](http://pathologytestsexplained.org.au)



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[www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au](http://www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au)

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Pathology Tests Explained is managed by a consortium of medical and scientific organisations representing pathology practice in Australia. More details at: [www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au/about](http://www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au/about)



Please use this QR code to access more information

### My Health Record

You'll find a direct link to the Pathology Tests Explained website embedded in the pathology results pages of your My Health Record.

Click on the link to find information about what your tests are investigating or measuring and what your results can tell your doctor.